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CHAPTER I

OUTLINE OF CULTURE IN MALEKULA

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

THE islands of the New Hebrides form a long archipelago stretching for about 400 miles from north to south between the 165th and 170th parallels of South Latitude and the 13th and 20th degrees of West Longitude, about midway between the Solomon Islands and Fiji, and flanked on the south-west by the Loyalty Islands and New Caledonia.

The southern islands of this archipelago are few and far between. In the centre is the island of Fate, with Vila, the port of call. Close by, on small islets, are two Polynesian-speaking communities whose ancestors are thought to have drifted over from Polynesia in comparatively recent times, but which have not greatly affected the culture of their neighbours. Some fifty miles northward of Fate the archipelago divides, one branch going due north and the other north-west. The nodal point where these two branches divide is a volcanic area containing two active craters, one on the small island of Lopevi consisting of a single volcano rising sheer from the sea, and the other on the larger island of Ambrim where, in 1913, a whole Mission station was engulfed in an eruption. Westward of this lies the southern portion of Malekula, an island sixty miles long, forming the base of the north-westerly branch of the archipelago. Off its south-eastern coast lie the Maskelyne Islands, and at the western extremity of its southern coastline is South-West Bay, where Deacon did most of his field-work. It is from this southern and south-western region of Malekula that the artificially elongated skulls found in so many museums have been acquired, cranial deformation not being practised in the more northerly regions of the island. It is here also that exists the elaborate mortuary ritual during the course of which these skulls are mounted on wooden effigies and preserved in the men's houses.

Very different from the relative isolation of South Malekula is the situation of the Small Islands that lie off its north-eastern coast. They are in the fortunate position of facing inwards towards the comparatively enclosed inland sea bounded on the south by Ambrim, on the east by Raga[1] which stretches due north of Ambrim, on the north-east by Oba, and on the north-west by Malo and the largest island of the group called Santo. The islands that bound this inland sea, together with Maewo[2]

[1] Also called Pentecost. [2] Also called Aurora.

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597 is closely connected with the class systems of kinship, which formerly existed throughout this part of Melanesia, and that its function is to keep a proper balance between the various sections of which society is composed. This fact is implicit in Codrington's statement that in the Banks Islands "childless parents naturally adopt a child of kin to the wife, so that the adopted child occupies the position of one born in the house [i.e. matrilineal moiety]; but if, as sometimes happens, an orphan child from the husband's kin is adopted out of pity, it is brought up as of kin to the wife, and care is taken to conceal the fact of adoption."[1] This is of course a simple case, since in the Banks Islands there are at present only two overtly recognised marriage classes, namely the two matrilineal moieties.

Regulations on Vao.

On Vao, where the marriage sections are more complicated, the rules of adoption as stated to me were that:

(*a*) The adopted child must be of the same generation as the adopter's own children.

(*b*) The choice is usually restricted to the children of a man's own classificatory brothers within his own patrilineal double-village.

(*c*) This rule may be departed from and a child adopted from another double-village only if the real and adopting fathers' mothers are sisters. Thus, men of Pete-hul and Peter-ihi may adopt one another's children only in those cases in which the real and adopting fathers have common maternal grandparents.

Thus, while in certain cases minor kinship adjustments would have to be made, it is seen that in maintaining the balance of social organisation by the device of frequent adoptions the greatest care is taken to make as little disturbance as possible in the kinship structure.

Male and female children may both be adopted, though the adoption of boys is more frequent than that of girls. In no case, however, may an eldest son or eldest daughter (*bete-ram* or *bete-ram vavine*) be adopted.

597 164 *Occasional return of the body of an old man to the Lodge of his birth.*

An interesting sidelight on the close bond of kinship still recognised between an adopted man and the Lodge of his birth, as well as on the importance to a community of its own powerful dead, is seen in the attitude of his kinsfolk to the disposal of his body after death. Thus, if a man of one "Side of the Lodge" adopts the male child of a man of the other "Side" of the same Quarter, and that child dies young, he is buried in his adopting father's house. If, on the other hand, he grows to be an honoured old man (*na-humbe*), there is frequently a discussion as to which

[1] Codrington, 3, p. 25. See also Rivers, 1, vol. I, p. 53.

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of the two "Sides of the Lodge" he shall be buried in, and he is as often as not taken to be buried in the cemetery belonging to the Lodge of his birth rather than that of his adoption.

The Rites

The act of adoption is called *tor-torean*, from *tore*, to "carry" or "lead by the hand." This contrasts interestingly with the word used for the same rite in Mota, namely *ramo*, of which the primary meaning is to "snatch," since in that island, as in all the Banks Islands of which we have record, not only have the parents no power to prevent the adoption of a new-born child, but those aspiring to adopt actually race to the spot the moment they hear of the birth, and the first to arrive and pay the midwife automatically obtains the child.[1] A somewhat similar race also takes place on Atchin.[2]

Adopting father "retains" child by giving its mother's brother the "communion fowl."

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On Vao, however, matters are, as a rule, regulated in a somewhat more seemly manner. There, if a man has no sons or wishes to adopt another either for private reasons or to maintain the balance in the social system, he will go to one of his classificatory "brothers" whose wife is about to deliver and will say to him, "If it is a boy, I will give the fowl to his mother's brother."[3] This refers to the fowl which the father of a new-born male child takes to the mother's brother the day after birth and with which this man makes a communion pudding in his own Lodge when all the members of the Lodge pray for the well-being of the child.[4] This constitutes a definite proposal to adopt. The prospective father may refuse, and cannot in any case accept without the mother's consent. If this consent is withheld, the matter rests there, but no further proposal from another man may be accepted. Considerations as to the character of the adopter do not arise. The parents cannot pick and choose among prospective candidates. It is a matter of wanting the child or not wanting it. If they wish to let it go, it must go to the first applicant.

If the parents of the future child agree, the adopting father a day or two after its birth takes the promised fowl to the mother's brother, who cooks it in a special pudding and, with the male members of his Lodge, makes communion with the ancestors in the manner already described. The mother's brother then makes a return present of a fowl to the adopting father, who performs a similar communion rite in his own Lodge. Though the latter has not yet paid for the child, he by this act officially "retains" it. This rite of retention is called *e tutu ghore*.[5]

[1] Rivers, 1, vol. I, pp. 50-5.
[2] See future volume.
[3] *Ghu lore na-to na-ghan*, "I will give him the fowl to eat."
[4] See p. 177.
[5] The same phrase is used for "retaining" a girl at betrothal (see p. 192).

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island of Ambrim. Here he lights a beacon, to attract the attention of a ghostly ferryman, and is then ferried over to Ambrim, where he mounts the volcano where the dead carry on their blissful existence, dancing all night and, according to the different accounts, either sleeping or becoming disintegrated during the day. Somewhere on the route (the versions differ as to where) the dead man encounters the Guardian Ghost, who tries to eat him, but is placated by the presentation of a pig, placed in the dead man's grave during his mortuary rites, on receipt of which the Guardian Ghost ceases to molest him, and he passes safely on his way.

Chief differences between Vao and other versions.

The three versions differ considerably in detail, notably—

(*a*) In the position of the Guardian Ghost, who in the Vao version is met with in the cave, but in the Wala (and by implication also in the Atchin) version stands in the form of a natural monolithic block on the reef at Bong-na-un.

(*b*) In knowledge of the dead man's doings on the journey, much of which is known on Atchin and Wala, but nothing at all on Vao.

(*c*) In the fact that in the Wala version the dead are said to dance as skeletons and their heads to fall off and their bodies fall asunder at dawn, when the bare bones remain lying on the ground till sundown, when they reassemble to resume their nightly dance. This belief is vehemently denied on Vao, where the natives conceive of their dead as carrying on life in the form of ordinary disembodied ghosts.

VAO VERSION

I will here give the Vao version only.

Burial at sundown. Pigs killed for presentation to Le-hev-hev.

Old men of grades *na-humbe* and *mer-sean* are buried in the squatting position.[1] Burial occurs at sundown, the moment when the nightly dance of the dead begins. The body is arrayed in all the finery and insignia due to the dead man for the rank which he has attained in the Maki rites. Immediately before inhumation, the first of a series of communion feasts is held,[2] in which a morsel of food is placed actually in the mouth of the dead man. The body is wrapped in fine mats, and a live pig thrown into the grave.[3] Though, according to one belief, the dead man immediately joins his ancestors, and is therefore buried at sundown in order that he may forthwith join in the nightly dance, according to another he takes

[1] See Mortuary Rites, p. 531.
[2] See p. 541.
[3] See p. 542.

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five,[1] and according to yet another ten,[2] days to get there. At all events, ten pigs must be sacrificed for his use on the journey. These ten pigs are sacrificed the morning after burial, but, such is the confusion of belief and the necessity that at all hazards he should have at least one pig to give to the Guardian Ghost, lest he should "go away quickly," a further pig is sacrificed immediately after inhumation.[3]

Dead man enters "Cave of the Dead." Is opposed by Le-hev-hev, but Ta-ghar Lawo intercedes. Proceeds to Bong-na-un.

The dead man first makes his way to the long black-sand beach called Ghoramp, where he enters the cave called *barang na ta-mat*, "Cave of the Dead." As he goes in, his way is blocked by Le-hev-hev.

As the ghost of the dead man tries to enter the cave Le-hev-hev pulls him back. But Ta-ghar Lawo, who is also present, takes the side of the new-comer and says to Le-hev-hev, "Leave him alone. Let him come and join all his friends over there," indicating the inside of the cave. Le-hev-hev then leaves hold of the new ghost, who presents It with the ghost of the pig sacrificed at burial. If he had not such a pig, Le-hev-hev would devour him.[4] The new-comer also pays a pig to Ta-ghar Lawo[5] for having pleaded for him, and then goes inside into the cave, to "join his dead friends who are gathered there."

He does not stay, however, but continues on his lonely way for forty-odd miles down the coast until he comes at sundown to the promontory called Tsungon Bong-na-un on the coast of Malekula facing the volcanic island of Ambrim.

Lights beacon. Is ferried to Ambrim and mounts volcano. Nightly dance of the dead.

Arrived at Bong-na-un, the dead man makes fire for a beacon to attract the attention of the ghostly ferryman on Ambrim, and also breaks off a piece of seaweed called *ro-go-rombol*, and beckons with it. At this, the ferryman, named Lingi, sets out from Ambrim in his ghost's canoe. Such ghostly craft are not canoes in anything but name, but simply any kind of flotsam borne by the sea. The name of this canoe was first given as *wuwun*, "banana-skin," but later it appeared that any piece of

[1] This number is also given by Speiser, who says that the soul of the dead man sets out on the fifth day after death (Speiser, 3, p. 322).

[2] In Lambumbu the dead depart by sea on the tenth day after death (Deacon, 4, p. 570).

[3] This is the "death pig" referred to by Godefroy, see p. 233.

[4] *Le-hev-hev e ghani.*

[5] In my account of the mortuary rites, no mention is made of the sacrifice of a second pig for Ta-ghar Lawo. Being of infinitely less importance than that paid to Le-hev-hev, my informant evidently forgot to mention it. This figure clearly corresponds with the Oba *Tagaro-lawua*, "Tagaro the Big" (see Codrington, 3, p. 170).

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this. He quotes a native saying, "After my death I must at all costs rejoin the souls of my ancestors. I can attain this only if Le-hev-hev lets me through, and It will let me through if I present my 'death pig.'" [1]

Therefore, "Every native, however poor, possesses a pig destined to be sacrificed and eaten on the day of his death. Children acquire theirs on the fortieth day after birth, at the time when their hair is cut. If they should happen to die before this, their relatives would sacrifice a small pig for them, just as for a grown man. The small pig given to a little child is destined to grow up with it. . . . I have several times seen certain very young pigs wandering around their houses, with the appearance of being completely domesticated. When I asked whom they belonged to, I would be told, for instance, that a given animal belonged to, say, L——. But this L—— was a baby only three months old. After several enquiries of this kind, I learned that every man on Vao, whether he be a new-born babe or an old man, has such a 'personal' pig. If the animal dies before its owner, it is replaced by another. It is his own inalienable property, and destined to be sacrificed at the death of its owner.

"It sometimes happens that a native changes his abode; sometimes his clan; much more rarely his tribe. He hesitates for a long time; but the day when, at last, he moves his 'death pig,' one may be sure that on that day he has definitely moved." [2]

Dependence on kinsfolk for sacrifice. No moral considerations.

"Everyone knows that after death he will have to do only [3] with Le-hev-hev; that is why this pig never leaves him: present or absent from his own country, his relatives will sacrifice it 'for his death.'"

Godefroy speaks of the sacrifice of this pig as "the necessary passport" if a dead man would set his feet on the road to the volcano. There is no moral test, nor is there, naturally, any question of what a man may or may not have done during his life. There is "only one great misfortune to fear: that of being devoured by Le-hev-hev. . . . To suffer this awful fate is not to be punished for crimes; it is simply to be the victim of a fatal negligence [i.e. in the unheard of case of a man's kinsfolk omitting to perform the sacrifice], the victim of a ferocious beast which seeks to devour us. But . . . from the moment that a man is in possession of a 'death pig' he seems without fear; in fact, each man has his pig ready to be sacrificed, in case of misfortune, on his tomb." "One thing is enough

[1] *nuku mbo na matean na nak*, literally, "my pig for my death."

[2] "In the same way, when a native decides to leave his village to take up his abode with the Père at the Mission, one is never certain about his sincerity till the day when this man arrives at the enclosure preceded by his 'death pig.'"

[3] Godefroy is here emphasising the fact that Le-hev-hev has complete control over the dead, with whom Ta-ghar has nothing whatever to do. (Compare, however, his intercession with Le-hev-hev in the cave, which Godefroy does not record.)

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to assure the peace of the dead man in the other life; that his pig should be sacrificed at his death."

Sacrifice for presentation to Le-hev-hev, as company for the dead man and for his food. Coconut trees cut down for his drink.

The "death pig" is not, however, the only one to be sacrificed during the early days of the mortuary rites. According to Melteg-lil-nale, the ghostly journey to Ambrim lasts ten days, "during which we sacrifice in the dancing-ground all the dead man's pigs, so that he shall not be devoured by Le-hev-hev, and so that he shall have company on the way."

"Thus, those which we kill on the day of his death are sacrificed so that Le-hev-hev may let him pass through and follow the 'path of fire.'"

On the other hand, "those which we kill during the following days are to supply the ghost of the dead man with food. For his drink we cut down ten coconut trees growing on his ground. We eat the flesh of the pigs which we have sacrificed; but we do not touch the coconuts; these we leave to serve as drink for the dead man."

Pigs for Le-hev-hev and all ghosts to eat, so that they shall not trouble the living. Vengeful activities of neglected ghosts.

We have seen how Melteg-lil-nale said, at the beginning of this account, "It is to save ourselves from Le-hev-hev that we sacrifice our pigs, that we dance, and that we perform all our rites." He also says, however, "We sacrifice them so that the ghosts shall not molest us; they make ceaseless demands for pigs to eat."

Note here the identification of all ghosts of those of high rank with Le-hev-hev referred to on p. 220.

This brave account of the number of pigs sacrificed, though true in respect of the enormous numbers of pigs sacrificed during the Maki rites, is not quite so true of those sacrificed on other occasions, when commercial greed vies jealously with ancestral duty. In this case "the ghosts often come back to torment us, their relatives on Vao, but do not molest strangers. They come to reproach our avarice in respect of sacrifices which, though bound to perform them, we do so but meanly. For example, when one of our kinsmen dies, it is our duty to sacrifice and eat all his pigs. But instead of sacrificing them all, we content ourselves with sacrificing perhaps only a third or quarter of them, dividing the rest among ourselves. Then the ghosts come in fury: some suddenly appear to us all red,[1] move before us for a moment and suddenly go, leaving us full of terror. Others often hide in the tops of trees, close to their graves, and,

[1] According to my notes, it is only the ghosts of those slain in battle, and who have thus no resting-place, that appear thus as will-o'-the-wisps. These ghosts are called *ta-mat oamp*, "fiery ghosts." See p. 631 and footnote p. 233.

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at night, attack those of us who come within their reach with a shower of pebbles and of small unripe fruit; or else they set themselves to sighing and weeping in a manner so sad, so sad, that we take fright and flee. Others seize us violently by the arm or shoulder and shake us. During the month following a burial we tremble with fright!" Elsewhere, he says, "Sometimes they stand upright on a path, as if coming to meet us: the apparition whirls round like a tornado of fire: it is all red, but only lasts a moment."

Mortuary rites sometimes performed before death.

To such a pitch has the fear of revengeful ghosts, combined with the desire to witness oneself the magnificence of one's own mortuary rites, reached, that it is not unknown for a powerful man actually to perform his own mortuary rites before his death.[1] Thus Godefroy tells us: "Meltelum is the happiest man on earth, since, feeling himself ageing, he has already performed his own mortuary rites three years ago. Observing the infirmities of age creeping upon him, and having only limited confidence in his kinsfolk's piety, this cunning old man who had so often deceived his compatriots took it into his head one fine day to order the performance of his obsequies and to sacrifice all his 'death pigs.' He is now well assured that the blessing of the Ambrim fire is accorded to him in advance; he knows he will not be eaten by Le-hev-hev, but that he will have the good fortune and the honour of going to take part in the endless palavers of his ancestors. Now, he has nothing to do but wait; and," says the reverend father, not with *arrière-pensée*, "he thinks less than ever about Ta-ghar up in the moon, or about Le-hev-hev who has already eaten his pigs. So, every day now he is to be seen strolling down the path towards the sea, his face cheery and uppish in spite of his age. He has indeed attained the summit of joy in respect of duty done and pride well satisfied."

The rites referred to above are almost certainly the feast called *matean*, described on pp. 544 ff. Melteg-tò, of the village of Ruruar on Atchin, went so far as to build for himself a huge stone mausoleum in the shape of a shark, and to perform similar rites long before his death, the consequences of which will be described in a future volume.

The Cave

Each Small Island has its appropriate cave on the mainland for those of low rank; said to contain fire.

I have already mentioned that, according to Godefroy's account of beliefs now held on Vao, twenty years since I was there, the ghosts of

[1] See p. 545.

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women became excluded, and by which incest (represented by copulation with the mother) in some form was abandoned; though it will be noted that there seems to have been no objection to To-wewe marrying his sister. 773

In the second place, there is the obvious connexion with mortuary rites, since the hero dies a voluntary death, presumably with the intention of being re-born.

Thirdly, there is the very remarkable mode of sepulture, in an upright hollow tree, recalling the tree-trunk burial of Attis and Osiris, while at the same time the tree chosen for this is that commonly used for making sea-going canoes, recalling many instances of burial in canoes throughout the islands.

Fourthly, there is the identification between the man and his tusked boar, which we have already seen to play such an important part in bringing about the identification between a man and the Guardian Ghost. It will be noted that the boar in question was a circle-tusker, which indicates that the event was comparatively recent.

Fifthly, the rite is definitely connected with ideas concerning the importance of the eldest son.

In the sixth place, it again emphasises the connexion between the newer form of the rite and the decimal system, the ten sons corresponding to the ten shrines erected in the later forms of Maki now practised on Atchin, together with the division of each village on that island into ten families each of whom is responsible for one shrine, and in the corresponding mythology concerning the ten grandsons of Le-saw-saw the Guardian Ghost.

OCCASIONS ON WHICH TO-WEWE'S SONG IS SUNG

(*a*) Vao

The song sung by To-wewe and his sister-wife, both when about to sacrifice the 100 twin-kernels and again when he enters on his voluntary death, is sung today on Vao on the occasion of the following *rites de passage*: 533 852

(*a*) During the mock battle that accompanies the celebration of the birth of an eldest son.[1] 764

(*b*) On the eve of the rites called *matean*, observed for the death of an old man prior to a dramatic scene in which the dead man is impersonated by a kinsman entering the hut built over his tomb and holds converse with the living, telling them that the dead man has returned to his mother's village.[2] 184

(*b*) Wala

The song is known also in other parts of the Small Islands. In Wala it is sung on the supreme occasion when a super-circle-tusker is consecrated for sacrifice at the Maki, clearly connecting this rite with To- 533 184

[1] See p. 183. [2] See p. 546.

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CHAPTER XXI

MORTUARY RITES

AGE-GRADES

THE duration and elaboration of mortuary rites depend partly on the deceased individual's age and sex, and partly, if a man, on the rank which he has attained in the Maki.

With regard to age, there are in common use certain terms applied to the main periods of a man's life, which may be termed age-grades. So far as I know, there are no definite limits fixed between these grades, nor any rites marking the transition from one to the other. The character of the mortuary rites varies with the grade, becoming more protracted and complicated with the advance in years. Moreover, the age-grades continue after death in such a manner that when a man dies his ghost continues to belong to the age-grade which he had attained during his lifetime, and is known, with two exceptions, by the same name, thus:

	Name when Alive	Name when Dead
Male child	*Na-sŏrik*	*Ta-mat na-sŏrik*
Young man (Youth)	*Malakel*	*Ta-mat malakel*
Middle-aged man	*Seagh*	*Ta-mat seagh* or *Ta-mat malat* [1]
Old man (grey-headed)	*Na-humbe*	*Ta-mat möt* [2]
Very old man (white-headed)	*Mer-sean*	*Ta-mat mer-sean*

Seagh and Mer-sean.

If, leaving out the term used for a male child, we analyse the four remaining terms used during a man's lifetime, we find that there are in fact only two main terms, namely *malakel* meaning "youth" and *na-humbe* meaning "old (grey-headed) man" (already met with as an honourable term of address and variant of the widespread word *supwe* [3]), each of which is followed by an intermediate term containing the syllable *se*, which is in essence no more than a superlative particle. Thus the grade *malakel* is followed by the grade *seagh* composed of the superlative *se* and the

[1] *Malat* means "quickly" or "too soon," i.e. "he dies before his time." Compare the phrase *e wor malat*, "born too soon."

[2] *Möt* means "grey." Compare Atchin *meut*. But Seniang *möt-möt* means "black."

[3] See pp. 258, 499, 693.

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561 adjectival termination *agh*, and so meaning "a superlative *malakel*." In the same way the grade *na-humbe* is followed by that of *mer-sean* (sometimes pronounced *mwer-sean*), formed of *mer* (or *mwer*) meaning "man," the superlative *se* and the nominal termination *an*, so that the whole term means "a superlative *na-humbe*."

Malakel and na-humbe.

Of the five age-grade terms these two, *malakel* and *na-humbe*, are in fact by far the most frequently met with in everyday conversation. They represent respectively the joy and beauty of youth and the power of old age. That they are culturally also the main categories of age is seen from the fact that on the day after the birth of a boy petitions are offered to the ancestors to look after him and let him grow to be "first a *malakel* and then a *na-humbe*," the remaining grades being definitely not mentioned.[1] The same two main age-categories are observed on Atchin, where the same word *malakel* is used for "young man" and the word *na-sup* (pronounced by the old men *na-sumb* and equivalent to the Vao *na-humbe*) is the honourable term for "old man." There is, however, an important sociological and religious distinction between the word used for "youth" and that used for "old man," for whereas *malakel* used for "a youth" refers to purely biological factors, being composed of *ma*, meaning "to become," and *lakel*, meaning "fecund," *na-humbe* is on the other hand primarily a religious term having to do with re-birth and thus meaning fecund in a spiritual rather than a biological sense.

BURIAL

Position, Place and Time

764 In Vao there is no burial on platforms or in canoes such as are found in other parts of the Northern New Hebrides, nor is there any making of artificial bodies and their subsequent preservation in the men's house such as is found in South and South-West Malekula.

Here all bodies are interred. There are, however, two chief methods of interment, namely in the extended or in the squatting position, corresponding with the two main age-grades just cited.

(*a*) Boys (*na-sŏrik*), youths (*malakel*) and middle-aged men (*seagh*) are buried within the dwelling-house [2] in the extended position, the verb used for this being *tovūni*. Since individuals of these age-grades are supposed to have not yet achieved the right to proceed after death to the land of the dead on the volcano, but to remain within the Cave of the Dead, there is

[1] See p. 177.

[2] Youths (*malakel*) are buried on the Lower Side of the house. Whether this applies also to middle-aged men (*seagh*) I do not know.

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no prescribed time for burial, which may take place at any time during the day.

(*b*) Old men (*na-humbe*) and very old men (*mer-sean*) are buried in the cemetery outside the Upper Side of their respective Lodges, usually in the squatting position, the phrase used for this being *gho vulu kũ ni*. In order that their ghosts may arrive in time for the nightly dance of the dead on the volcano on Ambrim, burial takes place shortly before sundown, when the dance begins.[1]

Old men (*na-humbe*) are buried in the cemeteries belonging to their respective "Sides of the Lodge," the right of burial in the cemeteries belonging to the Quarter-Lodges being reserved for very old men (*mer-sean*).[2] These cemeteries are called *na-tamp*, from which the Lodges themselves take their names, or *tambu na ta-mãl*, "the sacred place of ghosts." In the case of a *na-humbe* adopted at birth into the opposite "Side of the Lodge" in his own Quarter, he is sometimes (though not always) buried in the cemetery of the Lodge of his birth rather than that of his adoption (see p. 189).

A very old man (*mer-sean*) may on occasion be buried, at his own request, in some specially secluded spot in order to prevent the pollution of his grave by the too near proximity of women. A *ta-mat mõt* (the ghost of a *na-humbe*) may also be buried at his own request in his own dwelling-house, which is then given the name of *na-tamp* or *tambu na ta-mat*; or, if there are women living too close, he may be carried a little way towards the Lodge, and buried there, a small house being erected over the grave. Special places are reserved for this (see Map IV).[3]

If he is sick, or has sores, at the time of death, his body will be buried in some spot remote from any houses or roads, for fear that his spirit might otherwise transmit his disease to neighbours or passers-by.

Squatting position described.

Bodies buried in the squatting position have the heels drawn in close to the buttocks, the head straight up (not resting on the knees), and the arms folded round the knees, each hand lying along the elbow of the opposite arm.

Movement against burial in squatting position.

Lately there has been a movement against burial in this position, as it is feared that when the body decomposes the head may fall down on the knees or between the legs, and remain facing downwards, which is held to be undesirable. This movement has lately received impetus

[1] If an old man dies just after sundown, his body must be kept for burial just before sundown on the following day.

[2] Godefroy (1, 1933, p. 36) says that old men of what he speaks of as the highest rank, *na-humbe se*, are buried in tombs (*tambu*) close to the *ghamal*, but I know nothing of this.

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PLATE XXI, 1 and 2

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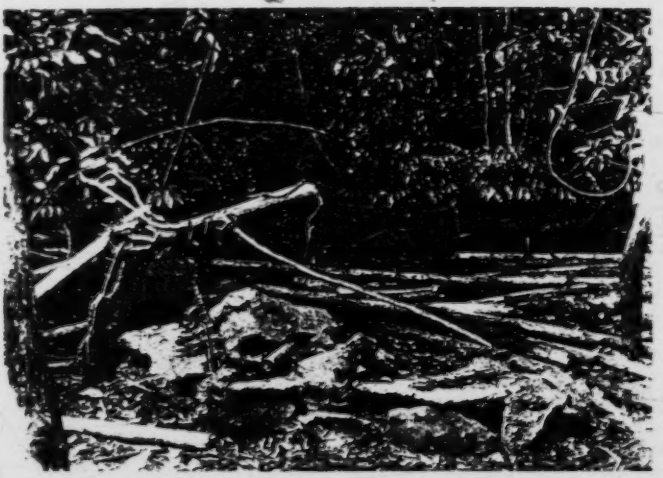

1. Stones placed over the grave of Melteg-rush, buried in the *extended* position at Lodge *La-mbot-na-ninge* in Pete-hul. The bamboo poles are the remains of the hut set up over it during the mortuary rites

2. Stones placed over the grave of an old man buried in the *squatting* position in Togh-vanu. The covering hut has long since decayed

[Facing p. 532]

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through the appearance above-ground of the leg-bone of a *ta-mat mōt* called Ma-taru, who was buried before my informant of the same name was born. The appearance of this bone naturally raised the question "What has happened to the head?" which at the time of burial must have been higher than the knees. The conclusion is that it must have fallen between the legs and be now facing downwards. In consequence, some old men have lately taken to being buried in the extended position.

I do not know why it should be considered undesirable that the head should face downwards. In any case, the fear clashes with the assumption referred to on p. 560 that the head sometimes falls off the body on the Seventh Day after death, corresponding with the Wala version of the Journey of the Dead according to which the head of the dead man dancing with his departed kinsmen on the volcano first falls off at dawn on the Seventh Day after death and thereafter at dawn every day of its other-worldly existence.[1] It is clear that we are here dealing with a conflict between two distinct beliefs and their associated burial customs. For in many parts of Malekula the skull and bones of the dead are at some period after burial disinterred and either all or some of them are placed in a communal ossuary or "sacred place." This is the case in Seniang, Lambumbu and Laravat[2] on the west, and at Sanbarei[3] on the east. Elsewhere it is the skull only that receives such treatment, and of the customs centering round this the most relevant from the point of view of the fears entertained on Vao is that of the Big Nambas, among whom the corpse is buried in a kneeling position with its head projecting above the surface of the ground. Two men watch by the grave and continually wash the head to hasten decomposition, and on the Seventh Day a big feast is held to celebrate the separation of the lower jaw from the upper part of the skull. On the Thirtieth Day after death "the head, which has by now rotted off the body, is then taken and put in the skull-house . . . where it is laid on a slab of stone at the far end in company with all the other ancient skulls of notable men."[4] At Matanavat on the north coast such treatment is reserved for an important man who is buried "with his head left sticking out" and the skull is later removed and placed on a dolmen.[5]

With regard to the Small Islands, however, according to my own information, the practice does not extend further north than Wala, where the skull is removed and placed inside a specially erected small dolmen

[1] See pp. 226, 230. [2] Deacon, 4, pp. 533, 564, 575. [3] Ibid., 4, p. 586.

[4] Ibid., 4, pp. 583-4. Similar customs are reported by Rivers from other parts of Melanesia. Thus, in Vanua Lava in the Banks Islands, "the fifth day after death is called . . . 'the head broken off,' because on that day the head is believed to break off from the body, or more probably because formerly the head was removed on that day" (Rivers, 1, vol. II, p. 265). In Ysabel of the Solomon Islands also the body is interred "with the head so near the surface that the skull can be removed later and preserved" (Rivers, 1, vol. II, p. 275).

[5] Harrisson, 2, pp. 58-9.

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in the cemetery itself. It is not done on Atchin nor, so far as I could learn, on Vao.[1]

On both these islands there is a definite movement against interment in the squatting position, here clearly associated with the removal of the skull, in favour of that in the extended position in which the body is left undisturbed. This movement appears to have had its local point of departure in the Malekulan coastal village of Lawor opposite Wala, whence so many other recent elements of Small Island culture have been diffused. I was assured on Atchin, for instance, that the people of the mainland villages of Lalep and Rel, in the interior, never bury in the squatting position, but always extended. The state of transition from one form to another has given rise to an immense number of variations in the actual position in which the body is buried. One such variation was that tried out at the burial of a man named Saraul, of Lodge *Naru* in the village of Pweter-tsüts on Atchin. This man was recently buried in a sitting position, his legs flat and his body reclining at an angle of about 45 degrees, with the arms stretched at full length by his side. He was buried in this manner at the request of his sister's sons at Wala, who, or whose relatives, had bought the right of doing so from Lawor. His classificatory brothers, Melteg-tò and Ta-maewo, old men still alive and both of whom held him in the highest respect, do not, however, intend to follow his example, but mean, like the old men on Vao, to be buried in the extended position.[2]

Hut over grave; gravestones.

When the body is buried in one of the Lodge cemeteries, whether in the squatting or the extended position, a small hut is erected over it, the

[1] Speiser, 3, p. 306, asserts that the skull is there also disinterred and preserved beneath one of the dolmens used in the Maki rites, but this statement needs corroboration since at no time during my prolonged stay on Atchin and my shorter one on Vao did I ever hear of such a practice, and these dolmens are, moreover, treated, except during the actual Maki rites, with scant respect.

Godefroy, however, mentions an incident tending to show that the Wala custom of placing the skull in a special small dolmen may formerly have existed on Vao (Godefroy, 1, 1933, pp. 32-3). One day, when his boys were digging for sand with which to make cement, they came across a mass of loose stones, all of the same size, beneath which was a cavity containing a human skull. The skull was very brittle, and the least pressure made it crumble away. The stones covering the skull appear to have been carefully placed together so as to form a chamber in which the skull rested. The depth was not great, as the excavation had barely gone below the humus at the time the discovery was made. As the excavation took place close to one of the old fighting-grounds he concludes that the skull belonged to a warrior slain in battle. But there were no other bones present, and it is more probable that the stone chamber containing the skull was a mortuary one similar to those now constructed on Wala.

[2] This change in position is of considerable interest since it confirms Rivers's conclusion that burial in what he terms the "sitting" posture was the custom of the dual organisation people in Melanesia, and also of the older layer of culture in Polynesia, in both of which places burial in the extended position was introduced at a later date (Rivers, 1, vol. II, pp. 281-2).

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764 door facing towards the Lodge. If the dead man belongs to the age-grade *mer-sean* or "very old man," this mortuary hut is called *ne-him na mer-sean*, "the old man's house." The grave itself, called *tambu*, is surrounded by thin upright coral blocks, which when used for this purpose are called *hiv-hiv*, and resting on these are covering-stones (also of thin coral) called *kur-kur-sat*.

In the case of a body buried in the squatting position, an opening is left in the upright blocks at a point facing the Lodge, presumably so as not to obstruct the dead man's view, and there is only a single covering-stone. The whole has the effect of a rough dolmen, though the blocks used are of much lighter material than those used for the dolmens of the Maki.

Where burial is in the extended position, the head-stone is much larger than the others, and owing to the length of the grave there are several covering-stones.

Orientation of the Body

With regard to the orientation of the bodies of those buried in the family cemetery outside the Upper Side of the Lodge, the rule is as follows:

(*a*) If buried in the squatting position, both the body and the door of the hut built over the grave must face the Lodge.

(*b*) If buried in the extended position, the door of the hut must still face the Lodge, but the body itself may be orientated in either of two ways:

(i) the feet shall be to the front and the head to the back (*bughto ne-him*) of the hut; or,

(ii) the body must lie across the width of the hut, with its head at the Upper Side.

In neither case is there any relation to the points of the compass, since orientation is in respect of the Lodge, the position of which is inconstant. Moreover, as may be seen on the plan of the village of Pete-hul,[1] a given cemetery is usually very much larger than its Lodge, so that even the graves in the same cemetery, being on different points on the arc of a common circle and all facing inwards, will actually be orientated in a variety of directions.

Fig. 56 shows a variety of possible positions. An archaeologist, coming after both Lodge and the huts over the graves had rotted away, would have difficulty in finding a common rule for the orientation of bodies which appear to be buried facing almost every conceivable direction, though such a rule, as we have seen, exists.

[1] See Map IV, p. 69.

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Stone Mausoleum Built for Old Man

Over and above the types of grave just mentioned, old men of very high rank and possessed of sufficient wealth sometimes build large mausolea for themselves during their own lifetime. Godefroy [1] mentions the building of one such tomb (*tambu*) for an old man on Vao by what he

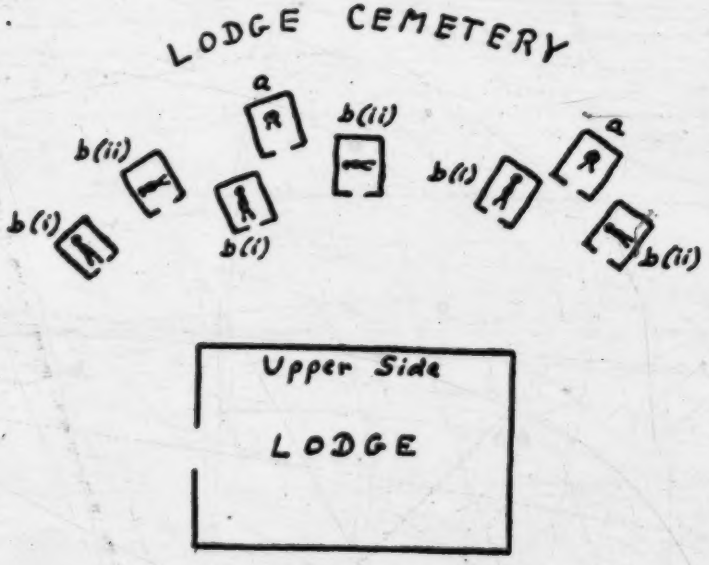

Fig. 56

Illustrating the orientation of burials in the Lodge cemetery.

[ ] = the hut over the grave, in all cases opening towards the Lodge.

a = interment in the *squatting* position, the two projections in the figure representing the feet and so also the direction in which the body is facing.

b = interment in the *extended* position, (i) feet to the front and head to the back; (ii) across the width of the hut, with the head at the Upper Side.

calls "forced labour" (*vehahag*).[2] The tomb took several months to build in a leisurely way, and large numbers of stones, great and small, went towards its construction. Though built with the aid of limed mortar, a modern innovation due to White influence, it followed an ancient pattern which Godefroy, however, unfortunately does not describe. It was

[1] Godefroy, 1, 1934, pp. 211-14.

[2] See p. 329, note 4.

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764 probably not unlike the large mausoleum built on Atchin in the shape of a shark, which will be described in a future volume.[1]

MORTUARY RITES

I obtained three accounts of mortuary rites: an initial, brief account dealing with the death of a young man, and a later, fuller one regarding the death of a *mer-sean*, followed by a few notes regarding the mortuary rites for women. They are very far from exhausting the subject. I will give the rites for a *mer-sean* first.

It will be noted that while the Fifth Day is an important one, no special importance is attached to any kind of observance on the Thirtieth Day, thus showing the early cultural layer to which these rites belong.

MORTUARY RITES FOR AN OLD MAN (MER-SEAN)

Attitude towards the death of an old man.

761 While every effort is made to preserve the life of a young man who has fallen sick, nothing is done to prevent the death of a man so old as to be called *mer-sean*. The native's usual attitude towards death as a tragic event due to the anger of offended ghosts or to evil magic undergoes a complete transformation when the death is that of a very old man. For not only has he fulfilled his life and died a natural death, but his power over the living, great during life, will be immensely increased once he has crossed the line into the regions of the departed. As my informant expressed it, "at the death of a young man we are sorry that his life has been cut off, so we fast (*taur*). But for an old man, his time is finished and it is right that he should die, so we do not mourn, but adorn ourselves."

This attitude is borne out by their behaviour, for where, in the case of a younger man, the weeping is long and to a great degree genuine, for an old man, though both men and women must make a good show of weeping, this is only "make-believe" and is soon over, for he has died at a good old age, and none is responsible for his death.

Manner of death. Regulation of debts.

763 I did not myself witness any deaths on Vao. My experience on Atchin is, however, confirmed by Godefroy with regard to Vao, in that he

[1] The only piece of special ritual he mentions in connexion with the construction of this tomb is the ritual bathing of the workers, who at the same time chant. When the day's work was finished the workers "went in a group to bathe, and, on this occasion, the bathing was turned into a ritual act, the bathers singing a slow majestic and beautiful religious chant . . . [as] they stood in the sea with the water up to their chests and with their arms outstretched along its surface. All sing: but from time to time two or three sink down into the water, swim several strokes, come up again and take their place in the song. After half an hour of singing, when all the verses were finished, the bathing regained its secular character" (Godefroy, 1, 1934, p. 213).

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Mortuary Officials (*Talagh*)

The chief rôle in the mortuary rites for a *mer-sean* is taken by an official called *talagh*, whose main duty is the actual preparation of the body for burial. This man I will call the chief mortuary official. Certain other duties are performed by either one or more assistants, also called by the same name, whom I will therefore speak of as the assistant mortuary officials, though no such division of terminology exists in the native language. The word "official" alone will be used where the context makes it clear to whom it refers.

These men should be selected from among the members of the dead man's Lodge, but feeling is against the chief official being the own brother or son of the deceased. This may be because his intimate handling of the corpse would be too distressing to so near a relative; in any case, these relatives have too much to do to allow of their undergoing the confinement entailed. If a member of the dead man's own "Side of the Lodge" is not available for the office, then one will be chosen from the other "Side of the Lodge" belonging to the same Quarter.

All the mortuary officials sleep in the Quarter-Lodge (outside which the old man is buried) until the Fourteenth Day after death, when, after the launching of the canoe with provisions for the deceased, the duties of the assistant officials are over. The chief official remains in the Lodge till the performance of a special ceremony called *Tulagh*, or *Talogh*, when he makes his first public appearance and is paid for his services.[1]

Restrictions in regard to women.

There is no fasting for these men, but they may not have connexion with women for a year after the death of the old man, nor may they enter a woman's house (*ne-hime vavine*) during this period. During their fourteen days in the Lodge they may not be seen of women,[2] except by

years he had bled his fellow natives white by the practice of magic to obtain rain and wind. . . .

"He sent in his account in the form of a cycas leaf to all those concerned, who hastened to do him satisfaction by bringing all those pigs that they had been owing to him for so long. Stretched out on his mat, with tenderly appraising eye he surveyed this fine circle of pigs tethered around him, each at its stake. . . ." (Godefroy, I, 1933, pp. 245-6.)

[1] See pp. 555-6.

[2] According to one statement, this only applies to the chief official, the others being allowed to go freely on errands connected with their work. In Wala, none of them may be seen, except a special one called the "outside official," who maintains the necessary connexion with the outside world, such as going to the mainland to procure food for himself and his companions.

The only time when the general rule of seclusion is broken in Vao is when the mortuary officials (with the possible exception of the chief official) appear in public at the feast called *Matean*. See p. 548.

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those female kinswomen of the dead man called *vene na woroan*,[1] who have married into other villages, and who at the news of death return to the home-village and spend a large part of their time in the Lodge with the mortuary officials. Thus, the two categories of women living in their own village by whom they may not be seen are (i) the unmarried girls, and (ii) all the wives of the male members of the village, though this latter category includes their own mothers, who keep them supplied with puddings.

A further restriction which applies only to the chief mortuary official is the prohibition against eating anything that has been touched by women (except his "mothers," who supply him with food), and a reciprocal prohibition against any woman eating anything that has been touched by him. The first thing he does on issuing from his seclusion is publicly to touch the yams which are to be distributed to the assembled guests, in order to demonstrate the removal of this restriction.

Duties of chief mortuary official.

The main duties of the chief mortuary official are:

(1) to prepare the body for burial;
(2) to place the morsel in the mouth of the dead man during the first feast of communion with him before burial;
(3) to conduct the subsequent communion rites held daily at sunrise and sunset until the Fourteenth Day after death;
(4) to blacken himself on the Fifth Day;
(5) to remain in seclusion till the ceremony of *Tulagh* or *Talogh*, when he is paid for his services.

Duties of assistant mortuary officials.

The main duties of the assistant mortuary officials are:

(1) to dig the grave;
(2) to deputise, if he so wishes, for the chief official at the twice-daily communion rites;
(3) to blacken themselves on the Fifth Day;
(4) to remain in seclusion till the Fourteenth Day;
(5) then to swim out into deep water with the canoe laden with provisions for the dead man.

Death and Burial

When a *mer-sean* dies, a taboo is placed on the fruit of such tree as is in season at that time. It is applicable to both men and women, and is not lifted till the morning of the first anniversary of his death.

[1] See pp. 133-4.

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No pig is sacrificed at the moment of death, as is the case on Atchin, but a fowl is killed and placed in a pudding to cook in the oven of the dead man's Quarter-Lodge. This pudding with the fowl in it is the material for a feast of communion to be held that evening, the dead man himself partaking, immediately before his burial.

The body is now carried into the Lodge, and if it is to be buried extended, it is laid out in this position on a coconut leaf immediately inside the door, with the head to the Upper Side and the feet towards the door. If burial is to be in the squatting position, the body is propped up in this attitude against the horizontal bamboos forming the front wall (*her-ghor*) of the Lodge, in the corner of the Upper Side nearest the door.

As soon as they hear of the death, all the dead man's kinswomen, called *vene na woroan*,[1] hasten home, each bringing a pig provided by her husband, which she gives to her brothers or fathers at a special presentation called *tam-tamean*.

They remain in the village (? or Lodge) all the time until the feast of Fourteenth Day, playing games with the mortuary officials inside the Lodge enclosure and even the Lodge itself, dancing *Pilagh*, and being the only women allowed to set eyes on the chief official who has the task of preparing the body for burial.[2]

Chief mortuary official prepares the body.

Towards sundown, the chief mortuary official sets about the task of preparing the body for burial. Having first washed it with water, he then anoints it all over with coconut oil (*na-hore*) and adorns it with all the insignia belonging to the Maki rank that the deceased had achieved during his lifetime. The body is first dressed with a new coconut-fibre waist-board (*na-tuve*) and penis-wrapper (*na-avu*), and the face blackened with a mixture of ashes called *na-mbong*,[3] in the manner of one carrying a torch at the Maki. No fowls' feathers are put in the hair, but instead a special twig of croton (*ro-sas*), here called *bei na mer-sean*, "old man's feathers." The dead man's shell-bead arm-badge (*na-mban*) is placed on his arm, with the scented leaves called *hakaul* and the red amaranthus flower called *lok-lok* inserted into it. Yet further scented leaves and another red amaranthus flower, together with another kind of croton called *ro-sas na-mbal*,[4] are inserted in the back of his waist-board. On his wrists are

[1] See pp. 133-4.

[2] Compare the Lambumbu custom where "female mourners" are secluded in the dead man's house for a period of thirty days, except for the twentieth, when they go down to the sea to bathe (Deacon, 4, p. 571).

[3] Young men are not blackened with *na-mbong*, but have their faces painted red.

[4] It is uncertain whether the word *na-mbal* here means "sacrifice" or "hawk."

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placed the shell bracelets (*na-lel*), pigs' tusks, and whatever other ornaments he may have worn during his lifetime.

While the chief mortuary official has been thus engaged, his assistants have been digging the grave outside the Upper Side of the Lodge. Over the grave they erect the mortuary hut described on p. 534 called *ne-him na mer-sean*, "the old man's house," with the entrance facing towards the Lodge.

Feast of communion with the dead man.

When all is ready, the body of the dead man, in all his finery, is brought outside the Lodge for the feast of communion, which takes place immediately before burial. Before the body is carried out, three kinds of mat are placed ready, one on top of the other, on the Upper Side immediately outside the Lodge. On the ground are placed the fine mats called *ta-mbagha*, on these are laid the ceremonial mats used as currency called *mangau*, and on the top of these a layer of ordinary sleeping-mats (*petūru*). The last two, *mangau* and *petūru*, will be used after the communion for wrapping up the body. If burial is to be in the extended position, the body is laid on the mats with the head to the Lodge and legs extended outwards. If in the squatting position, it is placed on the mats and propped up against the front of the Lodge.[1]

All the men of the Lodge now assemble for the feast of communion, which is to be made with the pudding containing the fowl that was killed when the old man died, and which has meanwhile been cooking in the Lodge. The feast is called *ra ghete-ghati*[2] *na-tò ne-na mer-sean*, "we partake of the fowl of the old man." The pudding is taken out of the oven, and each man present takes a morsel in his hand. The chief mortuary official takes a little piece and, holding it close to the mouth of the dead man, cries out "*Ghire, ghete-ghati na-longk*," "Let us partake of the pudding." *Ghire* is the first person plural inclusive pronoun, here equivalent to an emphatic "Let us." This word is repeated, and all those present reply with the long-drawn-out word "*Na . . . long . . . ki*," "The pudding," and put the morsels into their mouths, while the official puts his into the mouth of the dead man. This is now repeated with the fowl that was cooked in the pudding, the official crying out "Let us partake of the fowl," and those present answering with a long-drawn-out "*Na . . . tò . . . e*," "The fowl." Then the official (I do not know whether this refers to the chief official alone or to all of them) finishes up the rest of the pudding and the fowl so that nothing shall remain uneaten.

[1] Compare Codrington's account (3, p. 287) of how the corpse is "rolled in the mats valued as money and taken to the *ghamal*: if a great man, the mats are many, and the swathed corpse is set up between two stakes. After a time it is buried."

[2] This word is the equivalent of the Atchin *hatsi*.

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Body wrapped up. Tube placed in mouth for reception of communion food after burial.

The body is now wrapped up, first with the sleeping-mats and then with the ceremonial ones (*mangau*).[1] But it is necessary to supply the means by which further feasts of communion can be held with the body of the dead man after burial. For this purpose the end of a nodeless length of a special kind of thin bamboo called *benalum*,[2] between 2 feet and 2 feet 6 inches long, is placed in his mouth and supported in this position by the subsequent wrapping. When the body is buried, the other end of this bamboo tube will project a few inches above the surface of the ground, beneath the flat covering-stone (*kur-kur-vat*).

Burial and sacrifice of pigs for payment by the dead man to the Guardian Ghost. Live pig thrown into the grave, and body buried.

The fine *ta-mbagha* mat, on which the mats now used for wrapping up the body were laid, is left where it is. Similar, but brand-new, *ta-mbagha* mats are now used to line the grave, it being stipulated that the mats so used shall have been made of the leaves of coconuts growing within the Lodge enclosure.

The position and orientation of the grave have already been described on p. 534. Immediately before burial a small live pig is thrown into the grave. This is not the "death pig" cherished throughout a man's lifetime for payment to the Guardian Ghost, since this pig, as will be seen below, is sacrificed later, after the body has been buried. It may be that which the dead man gives to Ta-ghar Lawo for interceding for him. However this may be, the body is then lowered on top of it and covered with yet more *ta-mbagha* mats, after which the grave is filled in with earth, with only the bamboo tube from the dead man's mouth projecting above the surface.

Conch blown with signal for circle-tusker. "[illegible] pig" killed for payment to Le-hev-hev.

A number of men now blow on their conch-shell trumpets the blasts proper to a circle-tusker in honour of the circle-tuskers that the dead man has sacrificed during his lifetime, and also of the dead man himself into whom the souls of these tusked boars passed when sacrificed. Then the

[1] Speiser (3, pp. 274, 306) says that after several months, when the body has decomposed, these mats are dug up and used as currency, and suggests that their value as such (see p. 249) is due to the "*mana*" gained through contact with the dead. I know nothing of this, but cannot deny it, not having made enquiries on these lines. The Banks Islands mortuary rite called "draw mat" referred to by Rivers (1, vol. I, pp. 59, 170) may contain an allusion to a similar custom, though actually applied to the withdrawing of shell-money from the body before burial.

[2] Atchin *pinalum*.

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chief mortuary official sacrifices the dead man's own "death pig," reared by himself and kept close to him throughout life for this very purpose, since it is with the soul of this boar that he must propitiate Le-hev-hev the Guardian Ghost on his entrance into the Cave of the Dead, and which the Guardian Ghost eats instead of devouring him. This pig is called *e sivogĕni*, and is sacrificed now so that, with the confusion of beliefs regarding the actual moment when the dead man sets out on his journey through the cave to the volcano on Ambrim, he should be not unprovided with the necessary passport into the other world in case he should "go away quickly"—in other words, should set out immediately after death. My notes leave it uncertain whether the sacrificial signal is or is not sounded on the gongs for this "death pig."

The grave-stones, *hiv-hiv* and *kur-kur-vat ne-ghe mer-sean*, "uprights and covering-stones for the old man," are now placed in position in the manner already described, and seen in Plate XXI. Then the ends of the hut over the grave are filled in with horizontal bamboos (*her-ghor*), leaving a small opening on the side facing the Lodge.

The company now repairs to the dancing-ground, where the mortuary officials sacrifice yet further pigs, also called *e sivogĕni*, which are then distributed among the members of the various villages who have come to witness the rites. Gongs may or may not be sounded with the sacrificial signal for these pigs. There is no special gong-signal, as there is on Atchin, representing the footsteps of the dead man, at first loud and then fainter, as he sets out on his journey.

Twice-Daily Feast of Communion at the Grave until the Fourteenth Day

Every morning and every evening until the Fourteenth Day, at sunrise and sunset, the feast of communion with the body of the dead man is repeated at his grave, the chief mortuary official or one of his assistants leading the rite. A special pudding is cooked, and, the men of the dead man's Quarter being assembled, each man holds a morsel to his mouth, while the official holds another morsel over the top of the bamboo tube projecting from the mouth of the dead man. The official then says "*Ghire*," "Let us," and each man present partakes of his morsel, while the officiator drops his down the bamboo tube into the dead man's mouth.

Day after Burial

Next day ten more pigs provided by the dead man's son are sacrificed by the mortuary officials. These pigs are called *ŏehagh*, and their ghosts provide food for the dead man during the ten days that, according to one version, it takes him to reach the land of the dead. Their corporeal

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764 bodies, however, are distributed among the members of the various villages on the island. According to Godefroy, ten of the dead man's coconuts are cut down to provide him with drink. The fruit of these demolished coconut trees may not be touched by the living.

No *Atean*

The rite called *Atean*, performed at the death of a young man, is not included here, for this rite is a sign of sorrow, and "we do not mourn for an old man."

Fifth Day

In the mortuary rites of almost all peoples of the Northern New Hebrides the Fifth Day after death is one of the most important, since it is on this day that in the older layer of culture associated with burial in the squatting position and with the dolmen-Maki the dead man's period of probation ends and he is admitted with full rights into the land of the dead. Thus, in Raga, it is said that Suqe "would have men die only for five days," [1] and in many districts, including the Small Island of Wala, the ghost, who is thought to remain close to his home for the first few days after burial, is finally chased away on the Fifth Day.

In Vao, as we have seen, there is some confusion as to whether the journey to the volcano on Ambrim takes five or ten days. The rites, however, point to five as the correct number, for it is on the Fifth Day after death that the mortuary officials and also the sons and other close kinsmen of the dead man blacken themselves all over in token of his arrival. At the same time yet another pig is sacrificed, whose ghost is said to be presented by the dead man to the ghostly ferryman who ferries him over to Ambrim.

It is for this reason that, in the case of the burial of an old man in the squatting position, there is no rite corresponding to that of *Ber-mavel* [2] performed in the case of a young man buried in the extended position, which takes place on the Seventh Day after death, since the seven-day period of probation is connected exclusively with this latter form of burial.

Matean: "Death Feast"

769 *Movable feast. Must precede nightly dancing leading to rites of Fourteenth Day.*

We have just seen the importance of the Fifth Day after death as being that which, in the older layer of culture, terminates the ghost's period of probation, after which he is admitted with full rights into the land of the dead. On this quinary basis has been built up in many parts of the Northern New Hebrides a system of mortuary feasts held at intervals

[1] Codrington, 3, p. 169.

[2] See p. 560.

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is scarce, for it is necessary to be certain that every piece shall be eaten. If yams are plentiful, it might happen by oversight that, not being immediately cooked, one of the yams might be replanted and that the resulting new yams might at some later date be eaten by a woman. This would be a terrible thing to happen to yams in any way connected with the feast of communion with the dead.

Of the two days, the actual anniversary, *Simbean*, is the only one having true ritual importance. The second, *Rom van-van*, is "only for eating."

Taboo on fruit now lifted.

If any fruit (such as *naviho*) is in season at the time of the death of a *mer-sean* a taboo is placed on it, to be observed by both men and women, and is not lifted till the morning of the first anniversary, when it is cooked in the first of the puddings eaten in the Lodge.[1]

Special Sacrifice on Tenth Anniversary

According to Godefroy, anniversary communions continue until the tenth year after death, when a special sacrifice takes place. He gives, however, no further details.

MORTUARY RITES FOR A YOUNG MAN

The following notes on the death of a young man are very sketchy, and were taken down before I was aware of the age-grades stated above, and before obtaining the account of the mortuary rites for a *mer-sean*. Such comparisons as I have been able to make, therefore, have been made while writing it up, when it was too late to ask any of the many questions that present themselves.

Burial

When a young man dies his face is painted red [2] and he is wrapped in money-mats (*mangau*) and buried extended, at any time of day, in his own house, either at the Lower Side (*tosan atan*) or across the closed end of the house with his head to the Lower Side. Before he is lowered into the grave, a small live pig is thrown in. This pig is called *e tulo goni*,[3] "it accompanies him on his way." The dead man's body is then lowered into the grave, and immediately this has been done there takes place the sacrifice of a pig called *e mule ghini*, "he goes home," presumably the "death pig" sacrificed for presentation to the Guardian Ghost.

[1] Godefroy, 1, 1934, p. 52. [2] An old man's face is painted black. See p. 540.
[3] If the dead man is very young, this is omitted.

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764 When the two or four men who have buried the body turn to come out of the house, their way is blocked by an expert magician (*mava-mas*), who gives them leaves of a kind called *ro-viavi*, over which he has sung special songs. With these they go straight down to the sea, looking neither to the right nor to the left. Here they scoop up sea-water in the leaves, sipping it and spitting it out four times. Then they wash themselves all over with more water taken up in the leaves in order to "get rid of the smell of the corpse." Having thrown the leaves away, they fill their hands with sand and, returning to the dead man's house, stand one on each side, if there are two of them, or two on each side if there are four, and turning their backs to the house, throw the sand all together on to the roof.

(These men might appear to correspond to the mortuary officials who officiate at the death of an old man. But I was told that there are no such officials for the death of a young man, and these men certainly do not sleep in his house.)

Mothers, daughters and wives remain in the house till Fourteenth Day.

Till the feast held on the Fourteenth Day the mothers and daughters, and the wives of the dead man if he was married, sleep in the house and may not leave it except to relieve themselves. (Nothing could form a greater contrast to this than the rigid exclusion, in the case of an old man, of all women except those born in the village and married elsewhere.)

Atean

On the day after death there is a ceremony called *Atean*, not performed in the case of an old man, in which certain relatives take coconuts to the house of the deceased. (This, or something unrecorded in the rite, is apparently a mark of sorrow, which is the reason why it is not done in the case of an old man, for whom "we do not mourn.")

Fifth Day

On the morning of the Fifth Day (*bong o-lim*) after death the relatives blacken their faces, and in the evening bring yams and bananas, which are then redistributed among the guests. The verb used for this redistribution is *kel-kel*.

Seventh Day. *Ber-mavel*

On the evening of the Seventh Day after death (the day on which the head is said to fall off the body) the dead man's brother or son takes a fresh young coconut leaf and throws it on to the grave. This is called

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Ber-mavel, signifying the separation of the head from the body.[1] In reality the head remains untouched. This rite is doubtless connected with the new forms of belief in which seven days, and not five, is the dead man's period of probation. In Wala it is said of the dead on the Ambrim volcano that their heads fall off and their bones fall asunder every dawn till they join together again the following evening, but that this does not happen to the newly arrived ghost till the Seventh Day after his death.[2] The coconut leaf thrown on to the grave corresponds with the coconut placed on it in Lambumbu on the ninth day. This coconut represents the dead man's soul, and on the tenth day it is thrown out to sea, since it is on that day that the ghost is believed to set out for the Land of the Dead.[3]

Matean

The death feast called *Matean* takes place, as in the case of an old man, at a variable date and not too long after death.

Five days before, "counters" called *na-mbet* are distributed among the members of the dead man's Lodge, binding each to bring a given number of yams. The pigs to be killed on the morrow are reviewed by being tied to posts erected within the house-enclosure. There is no pudding, as there is on the corresponding occasion after the death of an old man, because the relatives are sad that the young man has died before his time.

Large pig killed and given to mother's brother.

Next morning the pigs are taken to the dancing-ground, and attached- and lone-yams are laid out for the visitors. These now assemble from all the villages in the island, and a pig is killed for each village represented. These pigs are called *ghoagh* or *gohōghine*. Then a large pig, here called *ne-numbe*, is killed and given to the people of the dead man's mother's village, though this is not so strictly observed here as on Atchin, only a small pig being sometimes killed for the mother's people, while the large pig is given to the dead man's "great friend."[4] Other pigs, dead and alive, the former all called *ne-numbe* and the latter *wol-wolean*, are given to all his "friends" "in payment for his death."

Some of the visitors have brought gifts of money-mats (*mangau*). All present are now paid with mats "for having cried" for the dead man, and the sacrificial signal is sounded on the gongs for the pigs that have been killed.

[1] *Ber* is equivalent to the Atchin *mpar*, meaning "ripe": *mavel* may be the same as the Atchin *mambur*, "broken off."

[2] See pp. 230, 532. [3] Deacon, 4, p. 570.

[4] Who this "great friend" may be is a matter which I unfortunately did not look into. On this subject with regard to Seniang see Deacon, 4, p. 538.

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561 Age-grades are as follows:

Vene sörik	Small girl.
„ *malakel*	Girl with breasts (nubile).
„ *narömb*	Woman with fully developed breasts.
„ *lagh*	Married woman.
„ *seagh*	Married woman a little advanced in years.
„ *mbamb*	Woman with child.

Complimentary titles.

554 As we have seen,[1] every woman's name, given at birth, begins with the prefix *Le-*, but at every performance of the Maki, the female relatives of the sacrificers receive complimentary titles, namely:

Le-tang	when Maki has been sacrificed by her *father*.
Le-lek	after the first sacrifice made by her *husband*.
Le-at	after every subsequent sacrifice performed by her *husband*.
Le-ghter	when Maki has been sacrificed by her *son*.

There is yet further a title:

Le-tete	taken when the sacrifice is made by the woman herself at the women's house at a "Women's Maki," about which I unfortunately know nothing.

Once a woman has become *Le-ghter*, she apparently remains so, becoming, as she grows older, without any rigidly demarcated age-limits, *Le-ghter e-humbe* and *Le-ghter mer-sean*.

If a man sees a married woman whose name and title he does not know, he will call her, in reference and in address, *Vavine*, *Le-lek*, *Le-at* or *Le-ghter* according to a guess at her age.

Mortuary Rites

764 I know very little about the mortuary rites for women, save that they also vary with age and rank.

Women bearing the titles *Le-tang*, *Le-lek* and *Le-at* are said to be buried, like young men, in their houses, with similar rites of *Atean*, Fifth Day, Seventh Day (*Ber-mavel*), Fourteenth Day (*na-lang* pudding eaten in secrecy before dawn) and *Matean*.

Very old women (*Le-ghter mer-sean*) are buried, like their male counterparts, either in the squatting or in the extended position, and either in their houses or a little way removed towards the Lodge. If very old, they may be buried in close proximity to the special places reserved for old men (*ta-mat möt*, the ghosts of *na-humbe*). It is said that at Tolamp they are actually buried in the cemeteries of the male *mer-sean*. There are no

[1] See p. 178.

1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1942
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mortuary officials and no communion rite (therefore no bamboo tube placed in the mouth), nor is there any launching of a canoe with provisions, and the *na-lang* pudding consumed on the Fourteenth Day is eaten in secrecy before dawn, thus resembling rites for a young man or woman. On the other hand, as for a male *mer-sean*, there is no *Atean* and no *Bermavel*, since, having died at a good old age, there is no need to mourn. 764

A variation is introduced into the *Matean* by the dancing of the Rail dance called *Pilagh* by women in the afternoon.

Heads of Vao Women Married on Wala or the Mainland are Returned

It is the custom, on the mainland and on Wala (but not on Vao or Atchin), to disinter the head some time after death, and in the case of a married woman to send it back, together with a large tusker, to her native village. In the case of a Vao woman married in an island or district where this custom obtains, her head is returned to Vao. In the case of a mainland or Wala woman married on Vao, however, since this is not the custom on this island, her head and body are allowed to lie undisturbed. 765

3: Harrisson N-5 (1934-1935) 1936
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Atchin

chief's daughter has been given up for years, Atchin contradicts his theory in fact. Baker I think underestimates the vanity of the native.

The Atchinese are among the very few peoples friendly to the administration, and they now appeal at once for peaceful settlements to all disputes. In the old days they gave a lot of trouble, but living on a small island they found a warship was more significant to them than to the bushmen. War is no more, abortion uncommon; the older men consciously want the place to grow; and grow it does. Thus it was the Atchinese who drew my attention to the exorbitantly high pig payments demanded as bride price all over the area in recent years; with their support I was able to lower the price by 80 per cent., back to pre-white level, thus enabling young men to marry with only normal difficulty. Similarly these folk like European medicines for introduced diseases, but use their own for the endemic ones. Their pig transactions and graded-society (*Maki*) rites have been modified; some things have been taken away, others added, both from white and black sources. Atchin dances are second only to those of Matanavat; they are kept up with exactitude and enthusiasm; also with new and often spontaneous variations in one type of the *na-leng*, the highest manifestation of Hebridean art and living. Sorcery and poison are no longer tolerated; the Atchinese are bitter against the adjacent island Vao for continuing these practices—bitter, but not disbelieving. Magic is not now important; old legends and stories, in which these people excel, are a part of daily life and juvenile instruction; the same myths collected by Layard and myself in 1914 and 1935 respectively agree perfectly, there has been no deterioration. The old burial rites and beliefs survive unimpaired.

In general the old customs that are savage or anti-social under modern conditions have disappeared, while those with business, religious, health, or play value have survived, even expanded. It is in this Europeanized heathenism, this intelligently primitive and adaptive but obstinate outlook, that the ancient Melanesian culture is most likely and able to survive. On Atchin to-day every village has its great drums, in lovely dancing glades, dolmens, carved human and bird effigies; a little distance away behind a native-style stone wall is a cluster of palm houses kept clean; at one corner perhaps a cement and iron house, the men's lodge, pride of the place. The women have more status, charm, freedom, and gaiety than elsewhere in the area.

I found the Atchinese charming people—and charm is a word I seldom think of applying to a Melanesian. They are thoroughly independent and sophisticated, combining Melanesian business ability with a more Polynesian intelligence and grace to direct it. The planters and missionaries have no good word to say for Atchin, which is an indication. Few tribes have had the good luck and intelligence to use the white man's things for their own advantage, in harmony with their own culture. I believe that what the Hebridean needs most to-day is guidance in this direction associated with simple medical aid. New education, religion and outlet are unnecessary and inadvisable now, and perhaps for some time to come. A few sympathetic men and women, without undue prejudice, could with a little money and many medicines work wonders. Atchin might well serve as a model in cultural adaptation. It